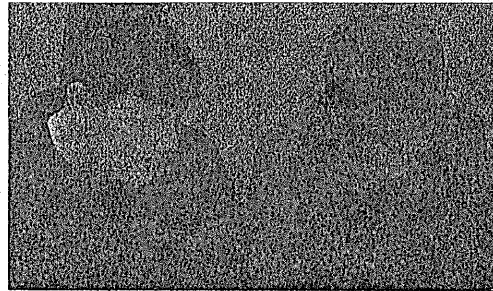


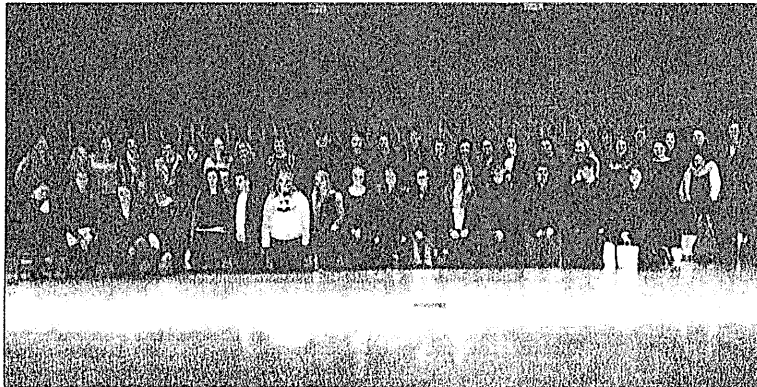
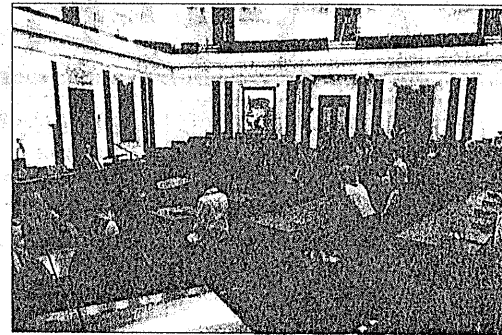
## NCUHS Traveled to Boston for a Day of Exploration and Learning

On Tuesday, March 27, 2018 more than 40 government and economics students from NCUHS had the opportunity to travel to Boston for a day of exploration and learning at Boston College and the Edward Kennedy Institute for the U. S. Senate. Students toured Boston College in the morning before heading over to the Kennedy Institute to participate in one of two Vermont Days organized by Senator Bernie Sanders this school year. Students in attendance were greeted via Skype by Senator Sanders and then participated in a mock Senate session on the topic of immigration reform alongside students from other schools in Vermont. This field trip was fully funded through a grant provided by VSAC.

*Submitted by: Aimee Alexander  
North Country Union High School  
History Department*



Ryan Morse and Evan Tremblay debate provisions in the immigration bill. (Courtesy Photos)





# Hoff's legacy

It would not be overstating the case to say that modern Vermont history began with Phil Hoff's election to governor in 1962. As the first Democrat elected to the state's highest office in more than a century, he upended Vermont's existing path and charted a new one, the extension of which our state continues to navigate.

Hoff died last week at 93, leaving a lasting legacy and a history of service to Vermont that extended well beyond his three terms as chief executive. In the years since he stepped down, the state has steadily built on his foundation — with leadership that at times was conservative, moderate, or very liberal — but always with an eye to the future and progress.

Hoff arrived in Vermont in 1951, a young law school graduate driving a two-door coupe with his young family's washing machine lashed in the trunk, settling in Burlington. After forays into local politics, Hoff ran for and won a seat in the Legislature, then two years later won a stunning upset victory over the incumbent Republican governor.

In the Legislature he was a member of the so-called "Young Turks," a group of almost all freshman legislators made up of mostly Republicans, all veterans of World War II, who were less defined by their ideology than by their insistent emphasis on modernizing and changing the state. They introduced dozens of bills, agitated for overhauling the very structure of the state, and pushed for a largely sleepy state Legislature to open their minds to progress.

Hoff became the de facto leader of the generation that pulled Vermont out of its rural backwater past, establishing state government as an engine of social change, and catalyzing Vermont's journey from solid Republican stronghold toward liberal progressive state.

Beyond this, Hoff brought a new, youthful energy to politics in Vermont, which appealed across the aisle. His energy was such that even dyed-in-the-wool conservative John McClaughry once wrote that his administration brought "freewheeling exuberant change to replace the cautious, prudent, unimaginative and rural-dominated Vermont governments of the past."

The Hoff era was marked by multiple departures from traditions of generations past.

Hoff led the modernization and expansion of state government, moving many areas of responsibility from the hands of towns and cities into an expanding network of agencies and departments. He created a program that brought minority children to Vermont in an effort to increase diversity in the state. He created the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, and led the overhaul and modernization of Vermont's state college system.

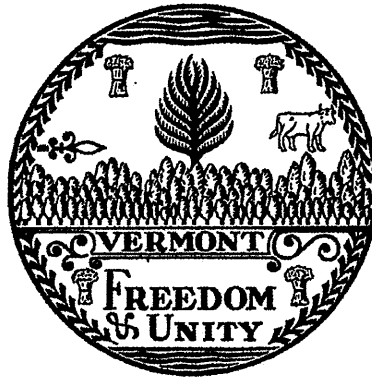
Some felt — and continue to feel — that this was an overreach and an unnecessary expansion of state power at the expense of local control. Others felt it brought equity and a deep breath of fresh air to what was an antiquated and inherently unequal system. It was in part driven and supported by an influx of immigrants — the so-called "hippies," people like Ben Cohen, Jerry Greenfield and Bernie Sanders, who brought a more worldly view and an intense period of social experimentation, environmental activism and rapid change to the state that continues to echo today.

Probably the most far-reaching change to take place on Hoff's watch is still evident today: the 1965 vote to change the makeup of the Legislature from an unconstitutional system where every town elected one representative, to the system that exists today that conforms to the one-person, one-vote principle. It is still the gold standard by which divisive battles in Montpelier are measured, and Hoff was one of the leaders who pushed for change.

Many of Hoff's initiatives that were unrealized in his time were later carried out by his successors, both Republican and Democrat, in part due to that population influx and shift.

Vermont did not, by any means, become liberal overnight. Hoff dragged the state to the left, but his defeat in a 1970 bid for the U.S. Senate showed perhaps that he had outpaced the state's appetite for change. He also did not change the state's deep-seated desire for frugality, practicality and independence that continues to this day.

He did, however, pave the way for many elements of modern Vermont — from Act 250 to civil unions — that would have been far different or delayed had he not left so profound a stamp on his adopted state.



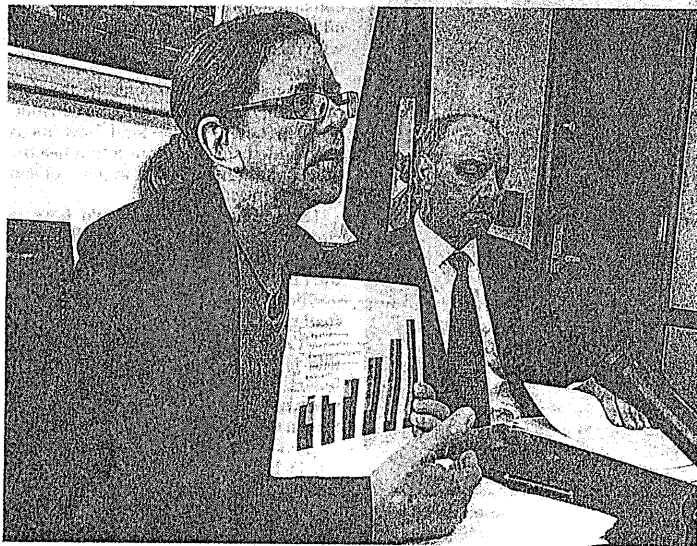
# Articles of Interest

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## Vermont

# Governor unveils new plan for avoiding property tax increase



Vermont Administration Secretary Susanne Young explains Gov. Phil Scott's education finance plan at a Tuesday news conference in Montpelier alongside Finance Commissioner Adam Greshin. APRIL MCCULLUM/FREE PRESS

April McCullum  
Burlington Free Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

MONTPELIER - Gov. Phil Scott's administration has abandoned an earlier idea of coercing school districts to reduce staff by threatening a tax penalty.

Administration officials still want to increase student-to-staff ratios — but now they would do it through a task force designed to help school districts to “manage their vacancies,” combined with another mechanism to put downward pressure on school budgets.

The administration is banking on \$32 million in savings in fiscal year 2020, top officials said Tuesday, based on about 350 to 400 school positions not being filled, though there is no guarantee of the savings and the administration did not provide documentation to explain their calculation.

The proposal is part of the governor's new, wide-ranging plan to avoid a property tax rate increase in the coming year combined with several policy changes intended to save money over the next five years.

“If we could achieve all of these goals,

we would achieve in 2024 savings and investments back into the system while keeping the statewide property tax rate stable,” Administration Secretary Susanne Young told reporters at a news conference Tuesday.

The governor's proposal finds \$58 million in one-time money to avoid an increase in property tax rates for the fiscal year beginning in July. Some of that money would otherwise be used for rainy-day reserves and paying down a long-term pension obligation.

Democratic leaders lack the governor's outright aversion to increasing the tax rate to fund schools. They acknowledged that they may need to use some one-time money to reach a compromise with the governor.

“The Senate, for sure, will have to think long and hard before it uses \$58 million of one-time money to artificially buy down rates for one year, knowing what the alternative uses of those dollars could be,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Tim Ashe, D/P-Chittenden.

The governor's plan purports to recoup

See PLAN, Page 7A



# Vermont

## Plan

Continued from Page 6A

the \$58 million in future years through a number of strategies. The plan combines several ideas that have already been considered in Montpelier in some form, including a statewide health plan for school employees and changes to the way property tax bills are adjusted based on income.

Here are some questions and answers about the proposal:

### How would Gov. Scott avoid a property tax rate increase?

Vermont needs about \$58 million to avoid an increase in education property tax rates for the coming fiscal year.

The Scott administration would leave voter-approved school budgets alone for fiscal year 2019. They would find the money from the following sources:

- \$19 million from a settlement with tobacco companies that was announced in March. (The House and Senate have their own ideas about how to use this money, including to pay down pension obligations and to fund workforce initiatives.)

- A total of \$20 million in anticipated surplus revenue from the current fiscal year.

- \$7 million from the general fund balance reserve

- \$2 million from a change in the income sensitivity program that reduces Vermonters' property tax bills based on income.



House Speaker Mitzi Johnson, D-South Hero, responds to Gov. Phil Scott's education finance plan alongside Senate President Pro Tempore Tim Ashe, D/P-Chittenden, at the Statehouse Tuesday. APRIL MCCULLUM/FREE PRESS

- \$10 million from miscellaneous other sources

### How would this plan affect school budgets in future years?

The Scott administration is proposing to gradually reduce the excess spending threshold — a tool that penalizes property taxpayers when their districts spend significantly more per student compared to the statewide average.

Currently, the excess spending threshold puts a greater tax burden on districts that spend more than 121 percent of the

statewide average. The Scott administration would reduce this threshold to 110 percent.

Tax Commissioner Kaj Samsom predicts that this change would pressure school districts to take a close look at their staffing levels.

The Scott administration hopes that the tax tool, combined with Act 46 district mergers and a new task force focused on staffing, would lead to fewer staff members in schools, saving \$32 million in fiscal year 2020 alone.

"It's going to happen naturally with Act 46. Everyone agrees," said Administration

Secretary Young. "Legislators will tell you that, the Education Agency will tell you that, that we are starting to achieve some savings through vacancies and through attrition."

The Scott administration wants to increase the number of students for each staff member to 5.75 over five years, up from 5.15. (The calculation excludes some categories of staff.)

The Scott proposal also anticipates some savings from a change to special education funding that has already been working through the Legislature.

### What are the chances of this plan being accepted?

Lawmakers will have to reach some agreement with Gov. Scott, who has threatened to veto any bill that raises taxes, and who has enough muscle in the House of Representatives to back up that commitment.

Some ideas in the plan are not likely to be acceptable to Democratic lawmakers.

For the second year in a row, for example, the Scott administration wants to pass a statewide school employee health system, and in the meantime it would mandate the terms of school employee health care contracts. House Speaker Mitzi Johnson said a mandate from Montpelier would contradict collective bargaining.

Democratic lawmakers are also cautious about the focus on cutting staff.

"We have non-negotiable positions, too," Ashe said, "which are that we're not going to willy-nilly slash staffing at schools without any purpose to it."

# State Senate OKs \$5.86B budget

By XANDER LANDEN  
VTDigger

The Senate gave preliminary approval on Friday to a \$5.86 billion budget proposal that would prioritize spending on the state's mental health system, restore funding to programs that serve vulnerable Vermonters and make investments in workforce development.

Facing no debate on floor, the budget received unanimous support and is expected to pass on a second vote next week.

In the Senate's budget bill, spending would increase slightly from last year's \$5.8 billion budget, but match the level in Gov. Phil Scott's proposal which lands just under \$5.86 billion, according to the Joint Fiscal Office.

The Scott administration laid out its proposal in January.

General fund spending in the Senate's bill is higher than Scott's by about \$8 million, and \$2 million higher than it would be under the House's budget proposal, which passed in March.

The Senate's budget makes several changes to Scott's proposal, and restores millions of dollars to social service and health programs that his administration proposed cutting or eliminating.

Some of these restorations include:

- \$4.3 million to a waiver program that provides support to more than 3,000 Vermonters with disabilities — \$2 million of this funding would come from state dollars.
- \$308,000 to a primary care loan repayment program that helps attract doctors and nurses to rural areas.
- \$600,000 to Vermont's cost sharing reduction program, which provides subsidies to help low-income Vermonters



MIKE DOUGHERTY — VTDIGGER

**Sen. Jane Kitchel, chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, told the Senate Friday that the budget makes significant investments in Vermont's fiscal health.**

with medical deductible and copay costs

The budget boosts funding for the Choices for Care program by about \$442,000 for services that allow the elderly and disabled Vermonters to stay in their homes.

It also provides \$4.3 million to boost compensation for mental health workers at Vermont's Designated Agencies and provides a million dollars towards a dozen psychiatric beds at The Brattleboro Retreat.

In crafting their proposal, Senate budget writers benefited from \$35 million in one-time spending money that came from the state's settlement with tobacco companies — \$7 million more than previously expected.

The Senate proposes using \$7 million for an overhaul of the state's approach to child welfare cases and \$5 million toward adding to the state's mental health and substance abuse treatment workforce.

Sen. Jane Kitchel told the Senate Friday that the budget makes significant investments in Vermont's fiscal health.

The budget would allocate \$10 million of the tobacco

settlement to help pay off the state's teacher pension liability—a move lawmakers have said could save the state \$30 million in interest.

It would also invest \$5.5 million of these one-time dollars into paying off a \$27 million loan for retired teachers' health care costs.

"We are paying our bills first and foremost," Kitchel said.

She noted that these financial obligations have eaten up Vermont's natural growth in state revenue.

The Senate budget relies on making cuts to Scott administration proposals including a new tuition assistance program for the Vermont National Guard and ThinkVermont/Innovation, an economic development plan.

In an interview this week, Sen. Dick Sears D-Bennington, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee said his panel put forth a strong budget, despite constraints.

"I feel given the situation that we're in with no increase in fees and no increase in taxes, I think it's very reasonable," he said.

## Vermont

# Maple syrup: Outcry over labeling rules

Associated Press

EAST MONTPELIER — Producers of pure maple syrup and honey aren't sweet on a plan to label their pure natural products as containing added sugars.

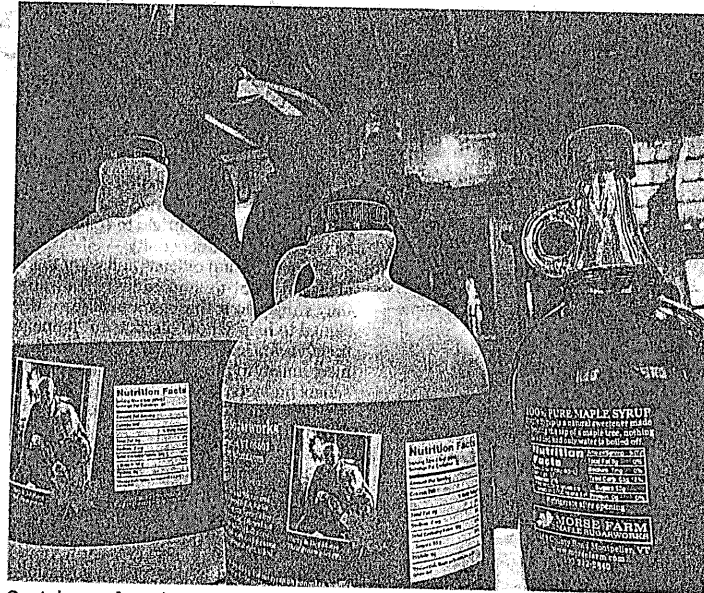
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration will be requiring updated nutrition labels for products that are expected to say that pure maple syrup and honey contain added sugars, which the producers and officials say is misleading and confusing and could hurt their industries.

"There are no added sugars. Maple is a pure product," said U.S. Rep. Peter Welch of Vermont, the top maple producing state in the country. "And added sugars to a consumer denotes corn syrup or some other added elements that are not natural," he said. A lot of consumers don't want added sugar, the Democrat said. "They want pure products, nothing more so than maple syrup."

Maple syrup comes right from the trees and from the soils, said Tom Morse of Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks in Montpelier on Tuesday.

"And we just refine it, and we market it, and we keep the quality as high as we possibly can. It's 67 percent maple sugar and that's what it is, nothing more, nothing less," he said.

To address industry concerns, the FDA has suggested that producers could use a symbol after the added sugars daily



Containers of maple syrup, with nutrition facts on their labels, are lined up on a table at Morse Farm Sugarworks in East Montpelier on Tuesday. LISA RATHKE/AP

value that would direct consumers to elsewhere on the label where they could say these sugars occur naturally in the

maple syrup or honey.

FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said he has made nutrition one of his top

priorities, and the Nutrition Facts label hasn't been meaningfully updated in decades.

"We've made it our goal to increase consumer awareness of the quantity of added sugars in food products consistent with recent dietary guideline recommendations.

The new label also contains the new daily value for added sugars, so consumers can better understand how foods with added sugars can fit into a healthy dietary pattern," he said in a statement released in March.

Large manufacturers would have to comply by Jan. 1, 2020, and smaller manufacturers by Jan. 1, 2021, according to the FDA's proposal.

The label with the symbol is still confusing, producers say.

"It's clear that when applied broadly this is an example of well-intentioned federal regulation that is totally illogical when applied in this context," said Roger Brown of Slopestyle Maple in Richmond.

It could lead to consumers wondering what's being added to pure honey, when nothing is, according to the American Honey Producers Association. Both industries say they work hard to protect their pure products from adulteration.

"Honey is a pure sugar so there's no need for added sugars," said Chris Hiatt, the association's vice president. "So it's misleading the consumer."

# SD S/2 P.22 Vermont Lawmakers Vote to Make Opioid Treatment Widely Available in Prison

The Vermont House gave unanimous approval last Thursday to a bill that would make medication for opioid addiction available to all inmates who need it.

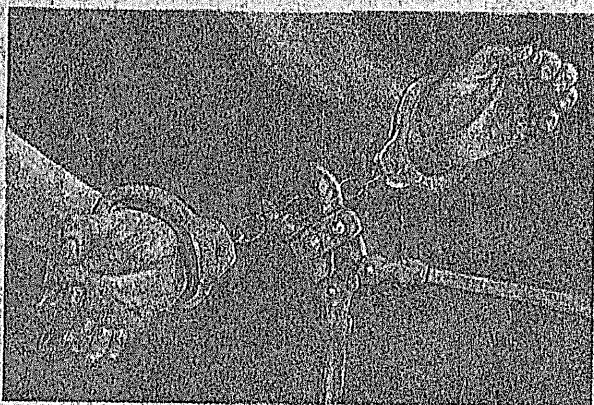
Inmates are currently taken off buprenorphine or methadone after 120 days. The bill, which cleared the Senate last month, would eliminate the time limit. And it would allow inmates to get a prescription while in prison, instead of limiting treatment to those who had one before they were incarcerated.

"This is a really important step for us in the fight against the opioid epidemic," said Rep. Selene Colburn (P-Burlington), who pushed for the change.

Rep. George Till (D-Jericho), a doctor, said the bill underscores the fact that addiction is a disease.

Last November, *Seven Days* wrote about inmates who were being taken off their addiction medication and forced to endure excruciating withdrawal. Some of those inmates sought street drugs when they were released and then overdosed.

A week after the story was published, the Department of Corrections announced



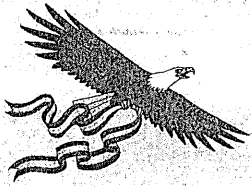
that it would expand treatment, previously limited to 30 days in most prisons, to 120 days.

The bill would require doctors who decide to terminate an inmate's medication to give that patient a written and verbal explanation. Former inmates told *Seven Days* they had been taken off their medication with no explanation.

The changes would cost roughly \$800,000, an investment that both House and Senate budget committees have committed to making. The House gave the bill final approval last Friday, and it is now back in the Senate.

ALICIA FREESE





## FORUM

### COMMENT AND DEBATE



## Attorney General Donovan Joins Coalition To Defend Clean Power Plan

Vermont Attorney General T.J. Donovan joined a coalition of 27 states, cities, and counties to fight for clean air and oppose the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan. The Clean Power Plan is the first nationwide limit on climate change pollution from existing fossil fuel-burning power plants.

"The Clean Power Plan plays a key role in protecting our environment," said Attorney General Donovan. "We're seeing the impacts of climate change in Vermont with increasingly severe storms and rising temperatures that could threaten our ski and maple industries. Vermont has been a part of helping defend the Clean Power Plan for years and we will continue to work to protect clean air, Vermont's environment and the public health

of all Vermonters."

In comments submitted to the EPA in response to the Agency's proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan, the coalition argued that the EPA was taking action without legal or factual support. The comments argue that the repeal ignores both the Plan's scientific underpinnings and the EPA's obligation to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants under the federal Clean Air Act.

The Clean Power Plan is the culmination of a decade-long effort by partnering states and cities to require mandatory cuts in the emissions of climate change pollution from fossil fuel-burning power plants under the Clean Air Act. The Clean Power Plan, along with the companion rule applicable to new, modified, and reconstructed power plants, will

control these emissions by setting limits on the amount of climate change pollution that power plants can emit. The rule for existing plants is expected to eliminate as much climate change pollution as is emitted by more than 160 million cars a year – or 70 percent of the nation's passenger cars.

The 27-member coalition joining Vermont in the filing of the comments included the Attorney Generals of New York, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia, and the chief legal officers of the cities of Boulder (Colorado), Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and South

Miami (Florida), and the county of Broward (Florida).

The Vermont Attorney General has been active in defending the Clean Power Plan and was a member of the coalitions that intervened in defense of the Clean Power Plan and the companion rule for new power plants against legal challenges in the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in 2015. The Vermont Attorney General has also participated in efforts to limit climate change pollution from other sources, including cars and oil and gas facilities, and participated in the legal challenge that resulted in the United States Supreme Court's landmark 2007 decision that paved the way for using the Clean Air Act to limit climate change pollution.

# Burlington schools reach tentative pact with paraeducators

Nicole Higgins DeSmet

Burlington Free Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Paraeducators and the Burlington School Board agreed on Tuesday to move forward with a new contract, moving both parties past an eight-month long negotiation that had reached an impasse.

"We highly value and deeply respect the work of our paraeducators here in the Burlington School District," School Board Chairwoman Clare Wool said as she announced the tentative contract agreement at Tuesday's special board meeting at Hunt Middle School.

Andrew Styles, vice president of the Burlington Education Association, confirmed the decision in an email to The Burlington Free Press.

"Details will follow after ratification by

both parties," Styles wrote.

Paraeducators are part-time staff who also happen to work with some of the district's most vulnerable students.

Styles and paraeducators were notably absent from the public comments list at Tuesday's meeting. Paraeducators had testified to the board and community at almost every meeting since Burlington teachers negotiated a contract following a four-day strike in September.

The contract talks broke down in December over health care premiums and what percentage the paraeducators would have to pay. Paraeducators told The Free Press they were paying as much of 80 percent of their salaries toward the cost of their health plan.

A fact-finding session on the health-care premium issue had been scheduled for Tuesday.



Michelle Clark, seated, and Sherrie Hiller, pre-school paraeducators at Flynn Elementary School, speak during the first meeting of the newly-constituted Burlington School Board on Tuesday. GLENN RUSSELL/FREE PRESS